

WHAT'S NEW IN THE PACIFIC

Tahiti

MARLON BRANDO'S OLD HANGOUT and private hide-away, the island of Tetiaroa, lies 35 miles north of Tahiti and consists of 13 islets (*motu*) surrounded by a lagoon. Today the runway is closed for safety reasons and only Brando's 42-year old son lives on the island as caretaker.

Tetiaroa has a modest and quite primitive Hotel Tetiaroa Village where Brando delighted in island life. Once the summer residence of Tahitian royalty, the island was first seen by Brando in 1960 while scouting film locations for *Mutiny on the Bounty*. At that time, a dentist from Canada owned the island; Brando bought it in 1967 for \$260,000. Six years later, the Hotel Tetiaroa Village opened, but its popularity was short-lived: there was neither running water nor air-conditioning in the primitive bungalows and the recreational facility consisted of one ping-pong table. Worse, the island is plagued with swarms of sand gnats and mosquitoes. A hurricane in 1983 damaged the resort and flattened Brando's favorite bungalow.

The executors of Brando's estate sold an interest in the island for 2 million dollars to Richard Bailey, a Tahiti-based hotel developer. Bailey's company, Tahiti Beachcomber SA, is constructing a \$65 million resort on Bora Bora, that features 80 villas built out over the lagoon. When that project is completed, Bailey will take on Tetiaroa. He envisions a resort charging \$1500 per night for one of 30 villas. The luxury hotel (estimated cost \$40 million) expects to be open in 2008, and will be called "The Brando." Old friends of Brando's claim that this sort of development is the opposite of what he planned for the island's future; he was rabid about preserving the eco-system and conserving the marine wildlife.

Mathew Heller Latimes.com, 23 October 2005

Hawai'i

A "SIGNIFICANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIND" was made by Rutter Development Corporation on the Big Island of Hawai'i when some construction equipment crashed through a lava tube. The find was made at "The Shores at Kohanaiki" several miles north of Kailua-Kona, where 500 luxury homes and a championship golf course are being constructed. No human remains were inside the cave, but they found more than 20 carved wooden images, standing 3 and 4 feet tall. Some were expertly finished, and two carved stones were also found. It is likely the objects date back to the 1800s.

Community groups had fought this development for years but finally relented when the developer agreed to provide a public coastal park and beach facilities. Because no human remains were found, the developer has the right to determine the disposition of the artifacts.

Sally Apgar, Star Bulletin, Honolulu, October 19, 2005

THE HOKULE'A PLANS AN ANNIVERSARY sail to Tahiti. The Polynesian Voyaging Society announced plans for a 30th anniversary sail to Tahiti, departing on the 29th April from Honolulu Bay (Maui). Some crewmembers from the 1976

voyage will be on board. The *Hokule'a* has been sailing without modern instruments for three decades, reviving the ancient Polynesian sailing tradition. The ten-ton, sixty-foot canoe has sailed throughout the Pacific, passing on the techniques of ancestral Polynesians and Micronesians.

The *Hokule'a* has visited Tahiti five times but this voyage will be first in eleven years. On the first trip in 1976, a huge crowd greeted the canoe when it arrived at Pape'ete after 33 days of sailing. Crewmembers joined with Tahitians at an emotional ceremony at Taputapuātea *marae* on Raiatea island. This *marae* is the most significant site in the South Pacific. Nainoa Thompson, the first Hawaiian to navigate a voyaging canoe in 600 years, will be part of the crew, along with others from the first historic trip. Thompson stated that 2006 is a year of looking back, understanding where they today, and where they are going in the future. Plans originally were to launch a new voyaging canoe in 2006 but construction and sea trials took longer than expected, and now it is typhoon season. The new canoe is now expected to sail next January, along with the *Hokule'a* on a 4,000-mile journey to Micronesia, Okinawa, and Hokkaido, Japan. The Polynesian Society operates the ship; the Bishop Museum is the owner of *Hokule'a*.

9 March, 2006. Tahitipresse

New Zealand

THREE DANISH TOURISTS WANDERING along a deserted beach in New Zealand spotted a piece of history lying on the shoreline. They immediately recognized that the smooth stone lying in the sand was similar to ancient battleaxe heads they had seen at home. The three men – Martin Jacobse, 19, Kristian Kappel, 19, and Kenneth Jespersen, 21 – handed their discovery, a Maori *toki* (adze) over to the Hawke's Bay Museum. Don Miller, the honorary curator of archaeology at the Hawke's Bay Museum, estimated that the *toki* was between 500 and 600 years old. Miller added that it was an excellent example of its kind, made of basalt, common to the area in which it was found.

The New Zealand Herald, 1 December, 2006

Marshall Islands

A STUDY BY THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE estimates that 530 cancers have been caused by the 15-megaton hydrogen bomb, named "Bravo" which was detonated in 1954. The report estimates many more cases are expected because of the young age of many of those exposed. At the time of the Bravo test at Bikini Atoll, the United States downplayed health implications and islanders were not evacuated despite the fact that their island was engulfed in fallout for days. Many islanders developed radiation burns although the official statement stated there "were no burns." US officials allowed the islanders to return to their home without any attempt at cleanup work.

Pacific News Bulletin, Vol. 10(4), April 2005

Palau

THE US CORPS OF ENGINEERS is completing a 53-mile road around the largest of Palau's islands, Babelthup. The road

has, so far, taken 12 years and cost \$149 million dollars. Plagued by heavy rains and mudslides, it is six years behind schedule and nearly \$30 million over budget. A newly completed \$40 million air-conditioned government center in Babelthup resembles the US Capitol building and is visible for miles. All this development is attracting international interest. Two-thirds of the economy is based on tourism and there are plans for upscale hotels, casinos, and golf courses. There is, however, no land-use plan. The Palauans worry about damage to their environment, their reefs and mangrove areas. The current population is 20,300 but only 13,000 are natives of Palau; the rest are foreign workers, who are hired by the big hotels.

Richard C. Paddock, LA Times, 27 March 2006

Niue

THE SMALL NATION OF NIUE is exploring the idea of mining uranium on the island. A prospecting company has won approval to drill into the deposit to see if, and how much, uranium is there. It would be a boost for the economy but there are concerns about the aquifer and the environment. Niue has a population of 1300 on its 260 square kilometer island.

Pacific News Bulletin, Vol. 20(8), August 2005

Tuvalu

A UN REPORT IDENTIFIES THE people of Tuvalu as "environmental refugees." The UN Undersecretary, Hans van Ginkel, stated "We should prepare now, to define, accept and accommodate this new breed of refugee." Rising sea levels could drive around 50 million people from their homes by 2010. Tuvalu already has struck a deal with New Zealand to accept its 11,600 population; they will be designated as refugees, thus making them eligible for food, shelter, medical care, etc.

Pacific News Bulletin, Vol. 20(8), August 2005

Nauru

NAURU'S FINANCE MINISTER, David Adeang, claims the prospects are good for secondary mining of phosphate on that devastated island. Studies are ongoing to see if further mining can be both feasible and profitable.

Pacific New Bulletin, June 2005

Fiji

ARCHAEOLOGISTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY of the South Pacific (Suva) are, with scientists from Kyoto University in Japan, studying and analyzing bones from 16 skeletons found on Bourewa, southwest Viti Levu. There is no doubt that the skeletons were of the Lapita era for they were found in association with Lapita pottery. Study so far has established that these people suffered from yaws, a contagious infection in humans. The Lapita peoples were the first to occupy the islands of Fiji, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Tonga, and Samoa.

USP Beat, News from the University of the South Pacific, Vol. 5(19), October 2005

AN INTERNATIONAL NETWORK has been formed to help eradicate invasive alien species (IAS) from small Pacific islands.

The University of the South Pacific (Fiji) is now part of the Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN), joining other organizations such as the Nature Conservancy, Pacific Regional Environment Programme, National Park Service, USDA Forest Department, etc. The US National Fish and Wildlife Foundation helped fund the project. The network serves teams of Pacific Island agencies responsible for trade, agricultural conservation and natural resources management. Fiji is struggling to eliminate rats, cane toads, and the mongoose. The introduction of alien species to an isolated island can have disastrous results, as we have seen happen on Easter Island and in Hawai'i.

USP Beat, News from the University of the South Pacific, Vol. 5(19), October 2005

French Polynesia

AN ORIENTATION COMMITTEE, endorsed by French Polynesia's cabinet, will investigate the impact of the nuclear tests carried out by France between 1966 and 1996 on Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls. The new committee will recognize the rights of workers on Moruroa who are suffering from illnesses that resulted from exposure to fallout from the tests. The first atmospheric tests in 1966 and 1967 were carried out under such conditions that nearby populations in Moruroa and Fangataufa were exposed to serious radioactive fallout. The truth has been hidden from the population.

Tahiti-Presse, Pacific News Bulletin, June 2005

Tuamotu Islands

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND ARCHAEOLOGIST, Marshall Weisler, is teaming up with French and Japanese scientists to learn more about colonization and religious monuments in the Tuamotus. By dating coral, Weisler hopes to discover when the islands were colonized and when the shrines were built. An archaeological expedition is planned in 2007 to test a new method of dating coral, called Uranium Series Dating, which is more precise than the previously-used radiocarbon dating; it analyzes uranium decay in the corals and is accurate to within 2-3 years for objects up to 600 years old.

University of Queensland News Online, 10 November 2005
<http://www.uq.edu.au/news/?article=8338>

Juan Fernandez Islands, Chile

THE JUAN FERNANDEZ ISLANDS BECAME the last stage of a naval episode during World War I. The German corsair *Dresden*, the last of von Spee's fleet, fled from the Falklands, with the British in hot pursuit. She had been driven from her hiding places in the southern channels by the lack of coal and sought refuge at Robinson Crusoe Island. On March 14, 1915 and when the ship was in Cumberland Bay, she was spotted and fired upon by the *Glasgow*. The *Dresden* replied, tried to negotiate, and then blew herself up within sight of the island. The *Dresden* was the last warship that formed part of the celebrated squadron that German admiral Graf Maximilian von Spee commanded and that the British fought against off the coasts of Chile and the Malvinas Islands (Falklands). On clear days, the ship's stacks can be seen from the beach at Cumberland Bay and some sailors from the *Dresden* are bur-

ied on the island.

In 1985, the wreck of the *Dresden* was declared a National Monument. Recently, naval divers recovered the bell of the *Dresden* from Cumberland Bay, an event carried out by specialized personnel of the Armada, in agreement with the German government. The recovered bell (31.5 inches diameter) was shown to a group including the cultural attaché of the German Embassy. The bell will stay at least two years in the Museo Naval undergoing treatments to avoid further deterioration after spending 91 years at 65 meters down in the ocean.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso, March 1, 2006

WHAT'S NEW IN HANGAROA

SURELY THE BIG NEWS ON THE ISLAND concerns the appointment of Melania Carolina Hotus Hey as governor of Rapa Nui. She was selected by Chile's recently elected president, Michelle Bachelet, and replaces outgoing Governor, Enrique Pakarati Ika. Madame Governor is the first woman to hold this position on the island although she has a long history of social work as the director of the Chilean National Organization for the Progress of Women, and the director of the island's Centro Juvenil. She is deeply committed to social and educational progress of the island and to the personal development of the island's youth. We send our congratulations and best wishes.

THIS LAST SUMMER was a busy one on Rapa Nui if the numbers of tourists even come close that of last year's head count of fifty thousand tourists. In December 2005, there were eight flights to the island each week (daily, plus 2 on Wednesday). Tapati festival drew a crowd, and the new queen of Tapati for 2006 is Tami Rapu Atan; runner-up is Vai a Heva Ika Riro-roko. Next year's Tapati festival will be held from 1-17 February 2007.

A NEW 60-TON ROUGH-TERRAIN CRANE was sent to the island from Tadano Ltd., Japan. Tadano presented the crane to Chile ambassador, Daniel Carvallo. Aside from the cost of the crane (\$500,000), Tadano also paid for shipping it to the island, free product support, and instructors to train operators. It was brought ashore at 'Anakena's beach by a special landing ship of the Chilean Navy. Tadano supplied the first crane to the island, brought in 1992. That 50-ton crane was used to set up the statues at Tongariki. However, it was damaged by severe weather and salt water. The new crane has anti-corrosion paint.

EASTER ISLAND CONTINUES to be under pressure from various schemes to "improve" the place. New hotels are continually being proposed and more vehicles continue to arrive. But already there are eight hotels on the island and some 2000 beds for tourists. And now a new scheme has been proposed for the island: a hotel at the pristine beach of Ovahe. <http://www.iorana.net/noticias.htm>

THE OLD RATTY SECTION OF THE HANGAROA HOTEL will be destroyed and a new one built. A three-story building with 200 beds is planned to replace the original structure. A high wall is to be built around the entire property and there will be a reception, spa, sauna, pool, aquarium, and convention rooms. There goes the neighborhood.

WHILE TOURISM BRINGS MONEY into the local economy (91% of the economy is based upon tourism), there are negative consequences due to lack of tourism management. In February, three giant cruise ships arrived on the same day, each disgorging hundreds of tourists who were rushed around the island via buses and then back to the ships. Sites and facilities are stressed, as is local transport. It becomes a mob scene.

The office of tourism on the island requested that an environmental impact study be conducted before beginning construction on the new and upscale Explora hotel, to be built outside the village. The local government skipped this procedure despite the fact that no one knows where the water for the hotel will come from. It will have to be pumped up, and brought across the landscape via pipes.

OUR SOURCES estimate that there are now more Chileans than Rapanui living on the island. They are making and selling woodcarvings, driving taxis, tour guiding, etc., whatever they can to make money, while the Rapanui struggle to get by. The woodcarving market is saturated and many tourists buy the cheaper (and inferior) carvings made by Chileans. Rapanui islanders want to restrict the influx of Chileans coming from the mainland to live on the island, but unless the constitution of Chile is changed, there is no way to stop them. Each flight brings more settlers to the island.



A photographic exhibition by Pavel Pavel was held at the Museo Sebastián Englert. Shown here at the opening of the exhibit (left to right) are Enrique Pakarati, Pavel, Museum Director, Francisco Torres, and the Ambassador from the Czech Republic, Lubomir Hladik and his wife, Eva Hladikova. The event celebrated twenty years since Pavel conducted experiments on moving the *moai*.

IN SPANISH, the AIDS acronym comes out as SIDA. The Chilean Ministry of Health has a subgroup called SIDACION and they sent representatives to Easter Island for three days of lectures, condom demonstrations, etc. However, only about 30 people showed up.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso, 1 February 2006.